2 programs link computer, TV

With the right add-in boards and software you can capture TV images on your hard disk or display the image from your computer monitor on a regular TV. A company called Willow peripherals sells two products that marry video display with computers.

The uses for these features vary from desktop publishing to group presentations to distribution of software demonstrations.

The products are called VGA-TV and Publishers' VGA.

Both are actually VGA cards with extra video features added on. Either card can be used as a VGA graphics card that displays up to the Super VGA standard on compatible computer monitors. The extra features of these cards go beyond VGA to embrace the realm of television.

Here's what the two cards can do:

■ Publishers' VGA. This card is designed to meet desktop publishing and image-based data base needs. Through a process called "frame grabbing" video images from a camera or videocassette recorder are translated into computer graphics files. Those files can then be displayed on the monitor or printed as a gray scale image.

Included software allows adjustments in brightness and contrast, as well as editing, cropping and rotating. The image can be previewed before capture and then saved in one of the common graphic file formats.

While scanners will convert small two-dimensional photos or art work to computer graphic formats, Publishers' VGA lets you convert any 3-D image seen by a video camera. Real estate agents can have a library of house images on disk and put together custom videotapes for different clients.

■ VGA-TV. This product offers the flip side of computer-video transfers. With this board and a simple cable connection to a TV or VCR, you can display and record — in text or graphics — everything that's shown on your computer monitor.

Some uses for VGA-TV include computer training sessions, interactive software demonstrations, animations, or the archiving of any computer session for review or distribution.

To achieve high-end VGA resolution your application programs, each must have a specially written "driver" program. Software with VGA-TV includes drivers for Microsoft Windows, PageMaker, Ventura Publisher, WordPerfect 5.0 and Lotus 1-2-3.

These are not the type of products that most businesses would use every day.

But there is one application that seems ready-made for this new technology — video projection of computer monitors for use in training sessions and seminars. Instead of aiming a video camera at a computer monitor, this seems to be a more elegant solution.

■ The Bottom Line: Both of these boards offer substantial value by combining VGA display with video capabilities.

Both products could be very cost effective if you have the need for this type of technology.

VGA-TV and Publisher's VGA are manufactured by Willow Peripherals, 190 Willow Ave., Bronx, New York 10454; (800) 444-1585. They each cost $699.

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